

to Evangelical Religion.

offered the incense to all kinds of villains, they escape from the disgust and from the benefit of this recollection by saying, that it is *honourable* fame that noble spirits seek; for they despise the ignorant multitude, and seek applause by none but worthy actions, and from none but worthy judges. Almost every one of these writers will sometimes, perhaps, advert to the approbation of the Supreme Being, as what wise and good men will value most; but such an occasional acknowledgment feebly counteracts the effect of "many glowing sentiments and descriptions of a contrary tendency.—If this be a correct animadversion on our popular fine writers, there can be no question whether they be likely to animate their readers with Christian motives of action.

I will remark only on one particular more, namely, the culpable license, careless, if not sometimes malignant, taken by the lighter order of these writers, and by some even of the graver, in their manner of ridiculing the cant and extravagance by which hypocrisy, fanaticism, or the peculiarities of a sect or a period, may have disgraced or falsified Christian doctrines. Sometimes, indeed, they have selected and burlesqued modes of expression which were *not* cant, and which ignorance and impiety alone would have dared to ridicule. And often, in exposing to contempt the follies of notion or language or manners, by which a Christian of good taste deploras that the profession of the gospel should ever have been deformed, they take not the smallest care to preserve a clear separation between what taste and sense have a right to explode, and what piety bids to reverence. By this criminal carelessness (to give it no stronger denomination), they have fixed repulsive and irreverent associations on the evangelical truth itself, for which many persons, when afterwards they have yielded their faith and affection to that truth, have had cause to wish that certain volumes had gone into the fire, instead of coming into their hands. Many others, who have not thus become its converts, retain the bad impression unabated, and cherish the disgust. Gay writers ought to know that this is dangerous ground.

I am sorry that this extended censure
on works of genius